

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 882

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: PARTIES GEAR UP FOR ELECTION CAMPAIGN

SUMMARY: POLITICAL PARTIES UNOFFICIALLY LAUNCHED ELECTION CAMPAIGN, AS CDS STAGED IMPRESSIVE RALLY IN LISBON FEB 8. HARASSMENT BY FAR LEFT DEMONSTRATORS WAS STYMIED BY EFFICIENT POLICE PROTECTION. MARIO SOARES SOUGHT TO DISPEL RUMORS OF SOCIALIST PARTY DISSENSION AT PRESS CONFERENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. CDS HOLDS LISBON RALLY: THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CENTER PARTY (CDS) HELD ITS FIRST MAJOR RALLY IN LISBON FEBRUARY 8. EMBASSY OBSERVER ON SCENE ESTIMATED OVERFLOW CROWD IN LISBON BULLRING AT 20,000. OPPOSITION TO THE CONSERVATIVES' RALLY WAS OR-
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GANIZED BY AD HOC COALITION OF ULTRA-LEFT GROUPS. A PROCESSION OF

10,000 PERSONS, MOSTLY STUDENTS, SPENT SEVERAL HOURS MARCHING NEAR THE BULLRING CHANTING "DEATH TO ELP AND THE CDS." RELATIVELY MINOR SCUFFLES BEFORE AND AFTER RALLY INJURED FOUR PERSONS. PRESENCE OF SEVERAL HUNDRED RIOT-EQUIPPED POLICE AND NATIONAL GUARD, PLUS 10 CROWD CONTROL VEHICLES PREVENTED MORE SERIOUS DISTURBANCES. CDS PRESIDENT FREITAS DO AMARAL TOLD CROWD THAT FACT RALLY COULD BE HELD DEMONSTRATED THAT PORTUGAL "HAD A GOVERNMENT AND WAS ON THE ROAD TO DEMOCRACY." THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY, ITSELF THE VICTIM OF RECENT VIOLENCE, ISSUED A STATEMENT DIS-ASSOCIATING ITSELF FROM THE ULTRA-LEFT COUNTER-DEMONSTRATION.

2. SOARES PRESS CONFERENCE: IN FEB 8 PRESS CONFERENCE OSTENSIBLY CALLED TO LAUNCH PARTY FUND-RAISING CAMPAIGN, MARIO SOARES MADE FOLLOWING MAJOR POINTS:

-- ELECTION STRATEGY: PS WILL NOT ALLY ITSELF WITH ANY OTHER PARTY IN UPCOMING ELECTIONS. NO JOINT LISTS. THE COMMUNISTS ARE UNACCEPTABLE ALLIES BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT YET PROVED THEIR "RECONVERSION" TO DEMOCRACY. THE POPULAR DEMOCRATS, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE FOLLOWING AN INCREASINGLY CENTER-RIGHTIST -- IF NOT RIGHTIST -- COURSE. COOPERATION WITH THE PPD DISSIDENTS WHO FORMED THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FEB 8, HOWEVER, MIGHT BE A POSSIBILITY. TIME WILL TELL.

-- RIGHT-WING VICTORY: EVEN IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT A PPD-CDS-PDC ALLIANCE COULD BE CONCLUDED, THOSE PARTIES WOULD BE UNABLE TO WIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. IF THEY DID, SUCH AN ALLIANCE WOULD LACK THE UNITY TO GOVERN. SOCIALISTS ARE SUFFICIENTLY COHERENT TO GOVERN EVEN WITHOUT ABSOLUTE MAJORITY.

-- COMMUNISTS: MANY PEOPLE (READ PPD AND CDS) ARE CURRENTLY PLAYING UP THE COMMUNIST THREAT. SOCIALISTS, WHO WERE THE FIRST TO DEFEND LIBERTY WHEN IT WAS THREATENED BY THE PCP, BELIEVE THAT COMMUNISTS ARE NOT NOW A MAJOR THREAT TO PORTUGAL. "IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO INSTITUTE A COMMUNIST REGIME IN THE NEXT SEVERAL GENERATIONS."

3. PPD DISSIDENTS ORGANIZE: FOLLOWING MEETING IN OUTSKIRTS OF OPORTO FEB 8, SOME OF DISSIDENTS WHO LEFT PPD DEC 8 ANNOUNCED CONFIDENTIAL

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FORMATION OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT - "MOVIMENTO SOCIAL DEMOCRATA" (MSD). GROUP, WHICH INCLUDED FORMER PPD SEC GEN EMIDIO GUERREIRO AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TREASURY SANTOS SILVA, STATED THAT IT WOULD ACT ALONGSIDE OTHER RECOGNIZED DEMOCRATIC FORCES "SINCE IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR PPD TO BECOME A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY AGAIN." MSD WAS FORMED DESPITE RECENT PROGRESS IN HEALING PPD SPLIT, EVIDENCED BY RETURN OF FIVE DISSIDENT ASSEMBLY DEPUTIES TO THE PARTY.

4. PCP WARNING: IN STATEMENT ISSUED FEB 6, THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY ONCE AGAIN SOUGHT TO PROMOTE A "UNITED FRONT FROM BELOW" WITH THE SOCIALISTS TO CONFRONT THE "REACTIONARY OFFENSIVE." THE PCP POINTED TO RECENT GOVERNMENT DECISIONS TO RETURN MANAGEMENT OF SEVERAL LARGE FIRMS TO THEIR FORMER OWNERS AND TO DEMONSTRATIONS OF FARMERS AGAINST THE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM AS MANIFESTATIONS OF THIS REACTIONARY TREND.

5. COMMENT: THE WEEKEND'S EVENTS MARK THE UNOFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. CDS RALLY WAS IMPRESSIVE, AND ESSENTIAL TO BUILD CDS CONFIDENCE IN LISBON'S PREVIOUSLY HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT. HIGHLY EFFICIENT POLICE PROTECTION AGAINST LEFTIST DISRUPTIONS CONTRASTED SHARPLY WITH CONDONATION OF SUCH LEFTIST HARASSMENTS BY GONCALVES GOVERNMENTS.

6. MAJOR POINT ON SOARES'S HIDDEN AGENDA AT PRESS CONFERENCE WAS EFFORT TO END RECENT SPATE OF STORIES OF DISSENSION WITHIN PARTY. FACT THAT SOARES WAS FLANKED BY LOPES CARDOSO, LEADER OF PS LEFT WING, AND SALGADO ZENHA, LEADER OF PS RIGHT WING, WAS DESIGNED TO EMPHASIZE THAT POINT. SOARES'S ARGUMENT THAT SOCIALISTS WILL NOT CHOOSE BETWEEN THE PPD AND THE COMMUNISTS IS GOOD ELECTORAL STRATEGY, DESIGNED TO REASSURE BOTH WINGS IN THE PARTY THAT THEY WILL NOT BE SOLD OUT.
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